

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION MEMORANDUM NO. 98-012 (II.G.1.)

To: Bureau Assistant Directors, Administration  
Director, Office of Administrative Services  
Bureau Finance Officers  
Finance Officer, Financial Management Services

From: Focus Leader, Asset and Debt Management  
Office of Financial Management

Subject: Travel of Non-Government Personnel to Attend Meetings and Conferences

This Financial Administration Memorandum (FAM) is being issued in response to several inquiries we have received regarding authorizing non-Government personnel to attend conferences and meetings at Government expense.

Title 31 U.S.C.1345 prohibits the expenditure of appropriations for travel, transportation, and subsistence for meetings, except as specifically provided by law. This section does not prohibit an agency from paying the expenses of an employee of the United States Government performing official duty which may include participation in a meeting or conference attendance. The Comptroller General has ruled that a person must be providing a direct service to the Federal government in order to qualify for travel and transportation under the definition of an employee as stated in 5 U.S.C. 5703 (55 CG 750). Mere attendance at a meeting or conference by a person not holding an appointment as an employee is not enough to qualify as an employee and allow payment of travel and/or transportation expenses, since there is no direct service being performed for the Federal Government.

Even though the Comptroller General recognized that conference attendance by some State and local officials could benefit an agency by gaining more acceptance and support for its programs, he maintained that this would not override the direct service requirement. On the other hand, invited officials who participate in meetings and conferences as advisors and/or by making presentations are considered to be providing a direct service and may receive direct reimbursement of their travel and transportation expenses, unless they are performing as a contractor or as an employee of a Federal Government contractor. Persons who qualify as an employee by providing a direct service to the Federal Government may be provided a Federal Government travel authorization and/or transportation tickets, including Government contract fare tickets.

Federal grant funds may be used by the grantee to pay the travel expenses for attendance at meetings and conferences, unless specifically controlled by the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. Thus, a grantee may pay travel expenses which cannot be paid directly from an agency appropriation (55 CG 750). Personnel traveling for a grantee are not eligible to receive a travel authorization, transportation tickets or direct reimbursement of their travel expenses from a Government agency.

Should you have questions or require additional information on this subject, please contact Lesley Oden on (202) 208-5223.